

## TESTIMONY ON SB 144

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee,

My name is Wayne Brewster and I live in Helena, Montana. I respectfully submit the following comments. So who am I to speak on this subject? I am a Montana citizen who raised two sons here and a life-long hunter, fisherman, and conservationist. I want my sons to have the opportunity to see wild bison in Montana. Consequently I stand today in opposition to Senate Bill 144.

This bill outlaws the possibility and options of having wild bison in Montana, managed as other wildlife through the direction of the FWP Commission and actions of the Department. Period, end of story! Others have spoken about the inappropriateness of this legislation from a Montana public policy standpoint. I would like to speak to the factual distortion regarding disease risk.

Part of this discussion has been about the bison from Yellowstone that have been through the quarantine process. These bison were captured in the wild and, according to the protocol agreed to by all involved agencies – including Montana, were subjected to a rigorous disease quarantine and testing protocol deemed more than adequate by all state and federal animal health regulatory authorities. Just how rigorous was this protocol?

Captured calves testing negative, were raised to maturity, bred, and gave birth – not once but twice. To be a part of this graduating class, all original animals, as well as their offspring had to consistently test disease free. For anyone familiar with brucellosis protocols, this is far above and beyond anything required to certify disease free status and by any published standard or regulation, these animals are disease free. We don't have to obsess about these animals because there are other conservation herds that could provide foundation animals.

But, something should be done with these bison. In the absence of a plan, the state gave them to Ted Turner to house while Montana figured this out. In exchange, Turner Ranches gets to keep 75% of the calves and the longer they are held, the more calves they get to keep. But if this is passed into law, no buffalo can get out alive. It would be illegal to do anything with this group, the other groups that are now going through the quarantining process, or any of their offspring but to kill them. Maybe Mr. Turner didn't make such a good deal? But they would be the most disease free, genetically pure, bison burgers at Ted's Montana Grill. Would you like to guess if that would be on the front page above the fold across the country - - - and the world?

But they could be sent to Moise. However, the Bison Range has enough trouble trimming their own excess of annually rounded-up, weighed, tagged, branded, vaccinated, historically cattle crossbreeds they may not have room for them. If they took them neither those bison, nor their offspring, could go anywhere else. Why not just kill them now?

The Montana Legislature has many difficult decisions to make. But you don't have to make this one. Let Montanan's be a part of this decision. Many people would like to discuss this with their families and their neighbors, talk about what they want Montana to be for their children and grand children. They also want to talk about what the effects this may have on them and their families - either positive or negative. They want the real facts displayed and discussed. They will also talk about what this could mean to the Nation, and to the world. They want a public process to look at where, in our over 145,000 square miles (that's almost 100 million acres), there could be found a few areas that could have some wild bison in Montana.